

## **Pioneer Doctor Gave Name to Blalock Lake, Mountain**

By Lee W. Roberts

Dr. N. G. Blalock was one of the best known and one of the most highly esteemed men in the Inland Empire during his active career which dated from about 1868 to the time of his death about 1920.

This widely famous doctor and surgeon had a likeable personality. The multitude who met and knew Dr. Blalock had nothing but kind words to say of him.

Some of these early pioneers visioned well the future greatness of the home of their choice and outside of their occupations or professions were imbued with a restlessness to bring about in a day that which was naturally an evolution requiring years.

Dr. Blalock engaged in about a half dozen great adventures to reclaim the newly found land of the setting sun each of these activities about 20 years ahead of the times. The net result of this, if I am rightly informed, resulted in economic disaster.

Another man somewhat of a similar type was my uncle, A. B. Roberts, who came to the valley some years earlier.

### Names Remembered

To recall the name of Blalock we have Blalock Mountain, Blalock orchards, Blalock railroad station near Arlington and Blalock Island in the Columbia River. The A.B. Roberts additions to Walla Walla cover much of what is now the central part of the city.

Financial adversity was far from crushing to men of this type. The life of activity and doing far outweighed paltry dollars.

We find in attempting to describe Dr. Blalock becomes an inescapable integral part.

### Climb Is Steep

About three miles of a steep climb up a mountain ridge from River Cabins (Roberts' ranch) you reach the summit and midcenter of Blalock Mountain. To the east an easy trail follows a wide smooth terrain along the crest just outside the wooded area. And over a little path you now proceed west for about a mile. Thence you turn north into a one-time wagon road now a bridle path which takes you into the deep woods with overhanging limbs brushing the passer by. After three-quarters of a mile you come down to a sloping grassy prairie a half mile long and a quarter wide. This spot is a rendezvous for large, brown ground squirrels and most always dozens of them can be seen scampering about or poking their heads out of burrows.

In the bottom of the swale was erected the first Blalock sawmill in 1878.

Harry G. Gilbert, a well-known citizen built this first sawmill of Blalock's. It was brought over from the abandoned sawmill of Dr. Dorsey Baker on Mill creek.

#### Reed Gives Facts

In a recent letter to me George Reed of the Hawley and Reed mill at the Tanks on Linton Mountain, told me that the Tanks sawmill was moved to Mill creek and added that a man named Robie operated this mill, the first in the Inland Empire and presumably on Meacham Mountain. The mill was moved from here to the Tanks by a man named Linton and for him the Linton mountain was named. This same mill was moved twice on Blalock and from here, where did it go? My cousins, the Hawley boys, have it up in the Pomeroy country, I think, but do not know.

Harry Gilbert acted as engineer for the sawmill the first year on Blalock and from Gilbert I collected considerable historical data that might otherwise have been lost.

The lumber here was carried directly from the mill in a flume and was sent down a precipitous slope for a mile into Flume canyon where it was carried for about seven miles to a point just above the P.P. & L. power-house. Water supply feeders were added to the flume at the upper end of Flume canyon and also from the Walla Walla River.

#### Mill Is Moved

The mill after a few years was moved about two miles east to a place known as head of mill canyon and here can be seen scraps of lumber and slabs. The lumber from this mill was hauled to the flume at the site of the first mill.

From here again soon the mill was moved north about two miles to the watershed of the north fork about this time the flume on the south fork was abandoned and a flume built down the north fork with a dump where now stands the town of Freewater. Storage dams were constructed in the small streams at the mills providing water to float the lumber in the flumes.

Bob Smith, a Milton resident showed me an ugly scar on top of the head where he was accidentally hit with an axe at the Blalock mill. Luckily for Smith a good doctor was at hand to administer first aid. This same Bob Smith attended school with a dozen other pupils on Blalock, the school being supported by the generous doctor.

Smith's father, who worked at the mill, admonished Smith never to say a word against Dr. Blalock because he was the best man that ever lived.

A pack train was maintained to carry supplies to Blalock and at times six mules pulled a light wagon up the precipitous slopes. Surely all this required a determined man to overcome such obstacles.

The Blalock mill operated for six or eight years when most of the red fir was logged. Red fir was the only timber sawed.

## Much Timber

There is still much fine large balsam or white fir and spruce on Blalock, ideal for making boxes and with this in view the Milton Box company is going to build an auto road up Blalock this fall to the top of the one grand mountain of the Blue range without anything to call a road or even a good trail.

A trip back over Blalock is an interesting venture but look out and do not lose your way. Some veteran mountaineers have done just this.

A fairly well defined old road will guide you through the Blalock woodland up hill and down dale, over open prairies, past lush meadows for about three miles to the site of the last mill on the north side where there is a large fertile open green with a pretty, tiny creek floating through it. Here you will see some tumbled down cabins, some pieces of rusted machinery and litter of sawed timber. Altogether with the surrounding shady banks of sylvan evergreen it is an entirely enticing and picturesque place.

Blalock now is mostly an impenetrable thicket of second growth spruce, a feature of logged off land. The enchanting old roads are mostly obliterated and the fascinating allure of old Blalock of 25 years ago is gone. Some of the aesthetic minded may opine this is a cruel sacrifice of natural charm but such is the price of progress.